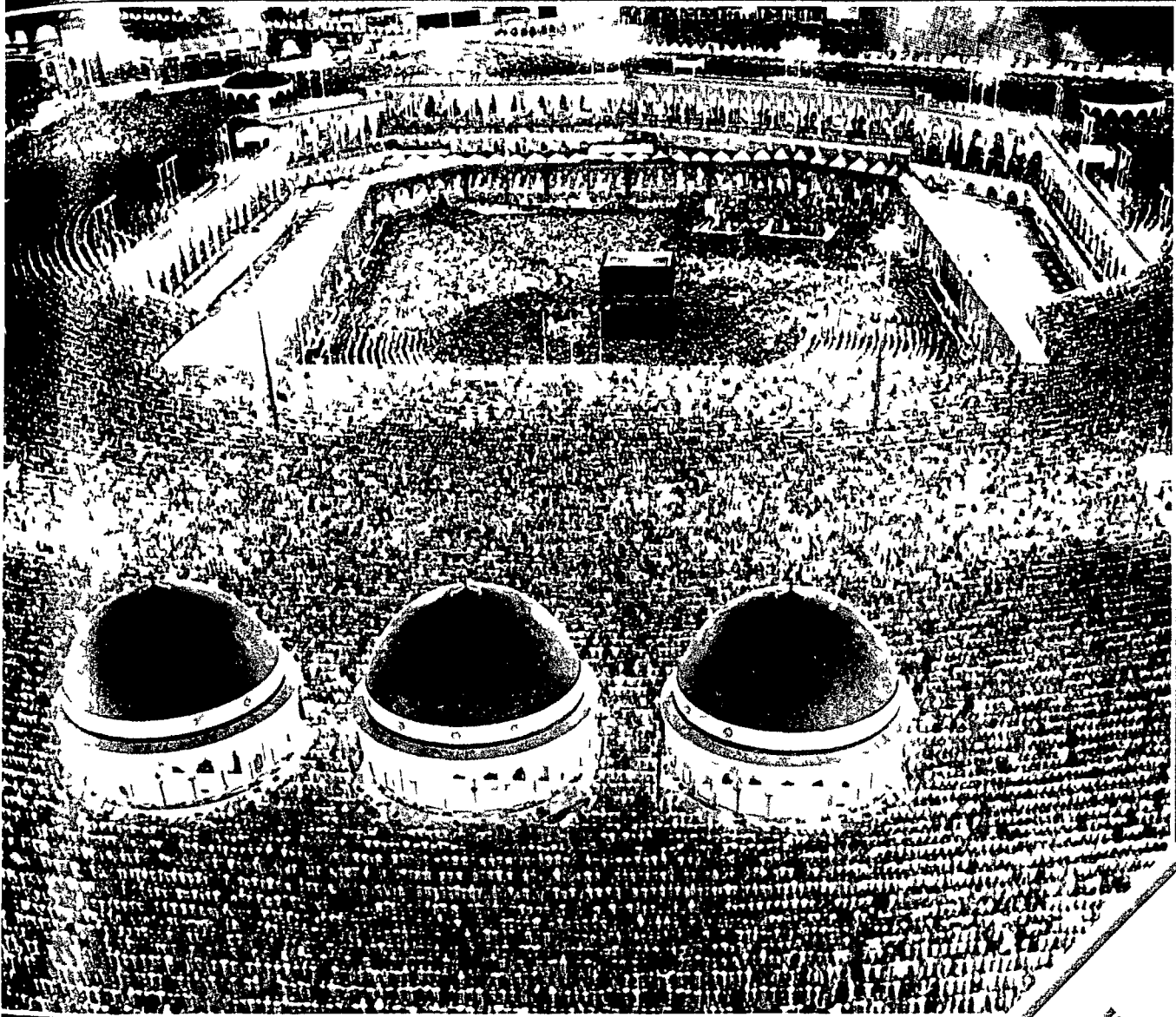


THE MUSLIM WORLD LEAGUE JOURNAL

Vol. 23

Ramadhan 1416 - February 1996

No. 9



Ramadhan:
Bliss and fulfilment



Highlights
of MWL
Constituent
Council
Meeting



قَالَ مُحَمَّدٌ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ
مَنْ أَضَلَّ مِنْكُمْ
أَمَّنَّا وَنَسْرَبَهُ
مُعَاوِيَةَ وَجَلَسَهُ
عِنْدَهُ فَوَقَّعَتْهُ يَوْمَ
فَكَانَ مَا بَيْنَهُمَا أَلَا نَسْرَبَهُ
بِحَدِّهِ

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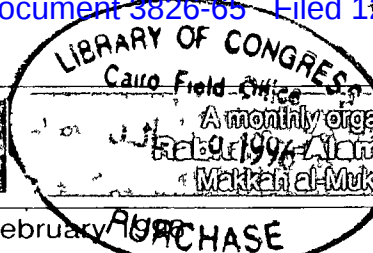
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The Muslim World League Journal

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Focus on Ramadhan

Another blessed month of Ramadhan is about to dawn on the Muslim world, bringing the glad tidings of Divine reward and mercy for the fasting believers. Muslims all over the world have girded up their loins to welcome this honoured guest, planning to spend the month in fasting, prayers, devotion and study of the Qur'an. *The Journal* highlights the unique excellence and beauty of the blessed month

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(Mrs) S A J Mozammel

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Director General Media & Culture
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Director of Press & Publications
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Editorial Board
Abdullahi Sheikh Muhammad
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Administrative Asstt
Muhammad Khalil Mirza

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Guidance from the Glorious Qur'an

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى
الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ (١٨٣) أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَن
كَانَ مِنكُم مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ وَعَلَى
الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ فَمَن تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ
خَيْرٌ لَهُ وَأَن تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (١٨٤)
شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ
مِّنَ الْهُدَى وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَن شَهِدَ مَعَكُمْ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ وَمَن
كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ
الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ
عَلَى مَا هَدَاكُم وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (١٨٥) ﴾

[القرة ١٨٣ - ١٨٥]

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

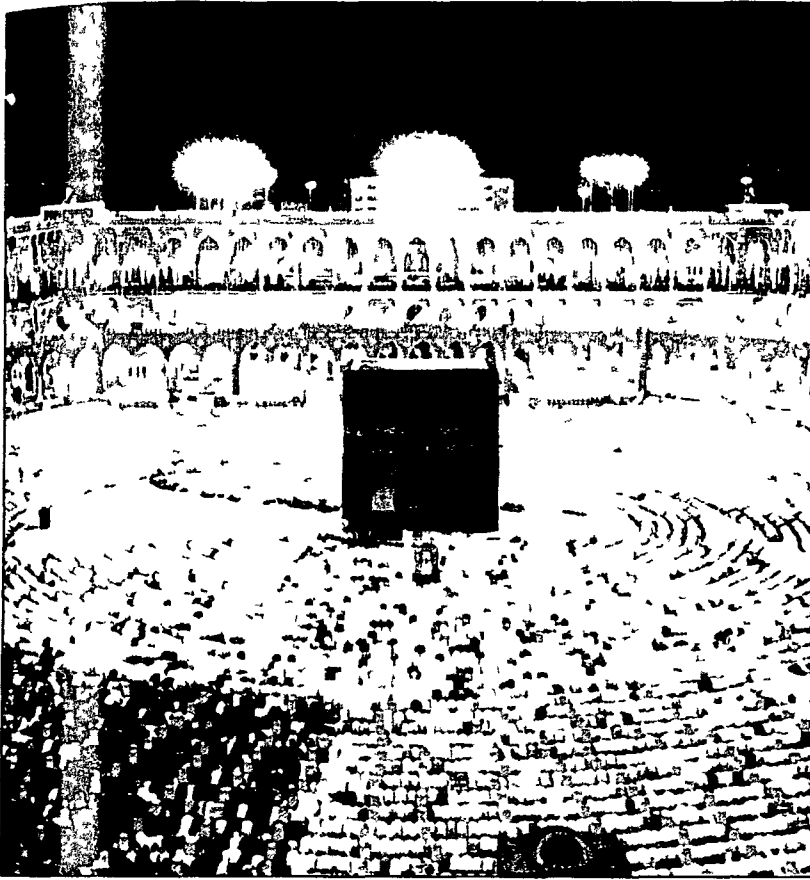
O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it had been prescribed¹ to those before you, that you may (learn) self-restraint – (fasting) for a fixed² number of days, but if any of you is ill or on a journey³ the prescribed number (should be made up) from days later For those who can do it⁴ (with hardship), is a ransom, the feeding of one that is indigent But the one, who will give more, of his own free will— it is better for him And it is better for you that you fast if you only knew Ramadhan (is the month) in which was sent down the Qur'an, as a guide to mankind, also clear (signs) for guidance and judgment⁵ (between right and wrong) So every one of you, who is present (at his home) during that month, should spend it in fasting But if any one is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed period (should be made up) by days later Allah intends every facility for you, He does not want to put you to difficulties He wants you to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him⁶ in that He has guided you, and perchance you shall be grateful

(11 183 185) Trans A Yusuf Ali

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Allama Ahdullah Yusuf Ali in his commentary on the above verses from *Surat al Baqarah* or *The Heifer* explains some of the terms and phrases as follows

1 As it was prescribed this does not mean that the Muslim fast is like the other fasts previously observed in the number of days in the time or manner of the fast or in other incidents it only means that the principle of self-denial by fasting is not a new one

2 This verse should be read with the verses 185-88 in order that the incidents of the physical fast may be fully understood with reference to its spiritual meaning. It signifies that the Muslim fast is not meant for self-torture. Although it is

stricter than other fasts it also provides alleviations for special circumstances. If it were merely a temporary abstention from food and drink it would be salutary to many people who habitually eat and drink to excess. The instincts for food, drink and sex are strong in the animal nature and temporary restraint from all these enables the attention to be directed to higher things. This is necessary through prayer, contemplation and acts of charity, not of the showy kind but by seeking out those really in need. Certain standards are prescribed but much higher standards are recommended.

3 Illness and journey must not be interpreted in an elastic sense they must be such as to cause

real pain or suffering if the fast were observed. For journeys a minimum standard of three marches is prescribed by some commentators others make it more precise by naming a distance of 16 *farsakhs* equivalent to about 48 miles. A journey of 8 or 9 miles on foot is more tiring than a similar one say by bullock cart. There are various degrees of fatigue in riding a given distance on horseback or by camel or in a comfortable train or by motor car or by steamer, aeroplane or airship. In my opinion the standard must depend on the means of locomotion and on the relative resources of the traveller. It is better to determine it in each case according to circumstances.

4 Those who can do it with *hardship* such as aged people or persons specially circumstanced. The Shafi'i would include a woman expecting a child or one who is nursing a baby but on this point opinion is not unanimous some holding that they ought to put in the fasts later, when they can.

5 *Iudgment* or *Furqan* means the criterion or standard by which we judge between right and wrong.

6 The regulations are again and again coupled with an insistence on two things: (a) the facilities and concessions given and (b) the spiritual significance of the fast without which it is like an empty shell without a kernel. If we realise this we shall look upon *Ramadhan* not as a burden but as a blessing and shall be duly grateful for the lead given to us in this matter.

(Compiled by Muhammad Khalil Mirza)

Sayings of Prophet Muhammad peace be on him

Fasting: Islam's Fourth Pillar

◆ Narrated Abu Huraira Allah's Apostle (peace be on him) said, "Allah said All deeds of Adam's sons (people) are for them except fasting which is for Me, and I will give the reward for it. Fasting is a shield or protection against committing sins. If one of you is fasting he should avoid obscenity and quarrelling, and if somebody should fight or quarrel with him, he should say 'I am fasting'. By Him in Whose Hands my soul is! The unpleasant smell coming from the mouth of a fasting person is better to Allah than the pleasant smell of musk. There are two pleasures for the fasting person: one at the time of breaking his fast and the other at the time when he meets his Lord, then he will be pleased because of his fasting."

◆ Narrated Abu Huraira Allah's Apostle (peace be on him) said, "When the month of Ramadhan starts the gates of the heavens are opened and the gates of Hell are closed and the devils are chained."

◆ Narrated Abu Huraira The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Whoever fasted the month of Ramadhan with faith (i.e. belief) and a wish for a reward from Allah, then all his past sins will be forgiven, and

whoever stood for the prayers in the Night of *Qadr* with Faith and a wish for reward from Allah, then all his previous sins will be forgiven.

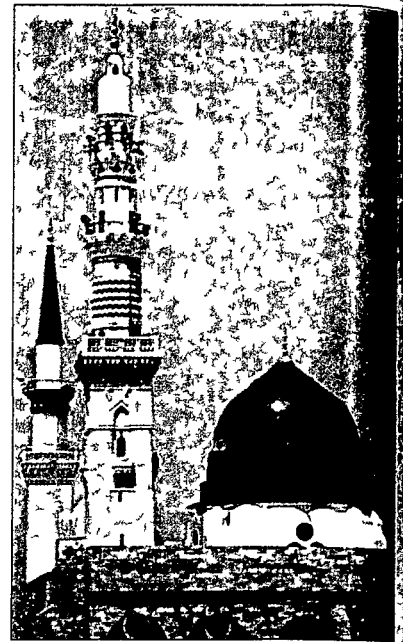
◆ Sahl bin Saad reported Allah's Messenger (peace be on him) as saying, "In Paradise there are eight gates among which is a gate called *ar Rayyan* through which only those who fast will enter."

◆ Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger (peace be on him) as saying, "If one does not abandon falsehood and action in accordance with it, God has no need that he should abandon his food and his drink."

◆ Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger (peace be on him) as saying, "Many a man who fasts gets nothing from his fasting but hunger and thirst and many a man, who prays during the night gets nothing from his nocturnal prayers but wakefulness."

◆ Jabir related on the authority of Anas that the Apostle of Allah (peace be on him) once said, "Five things break the fast: the telling of lies, backbiting, tale-bearing, perjury and the casting of covetous and lustful eyes."

◆ The Apostle of Allah (peace be



on him) once said "Verily fasting is a trust, let each therefore, take good care of his trust."

◆ Narrated Abu Huraira Allah's Apostle (peace be on him) said, "Whoever prayed at night the whole month of Ramadhan with belief and a wish for a reward from Allah then all his previous sins will be forgiven."

◆ Narrated Ibn Umar I heard Allah's Apostle (peace be on him) saying, "When you see the crescent (of Ramadhan) start fasting, and when you see the crescent (of the month of Shawwal) stop fasting and if the sky is overcast (and you cannot see it) then regard the month of Ramadhan as of 30 days."

◆ Aisha said that Hamza bin Amir al-Aslami who was greatly devoted to fasting, asked the Prophet (peace be on him) whether he should fast when on a journey, and received the reply, "Fast if you like or break your fast if you like."

(Compiled by Muhammad Khalil Mirza)

Cover Story



At the opening ceremony of the MWL Constituent Council's 34th session held at the Rabita headquarters in Makkah. Seen in the picture (From left) Dr. Abdullah Saleh al Obeid, Shaikh Abdul Aziz bin Baz, Prince Majid bin Abdul Aziz, Presidents Mamoon Abdul Qayyum and Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan.

MWL Constituent Council's 34th Session

UNITY & COOPERATION KEY TO MUSLIM SUCCESS -KING FAHD

Muhammad Nasir

IN behalf of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz, Makkah Region Governor Prince Majid bin Abdul Aziz formally opened the 34th session of the Constituent Council of the Muslim World League, at the MWL headquarters at Hamm al-Joud, Makkah al-Mukarramah, on Saturday 8 Shaaban 1416 corresponding to 30 December 1995. The ceremony was attended among others, by Shaikh Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah bin Baz, Chief Mufti Kingdom of Saudi

Arabia and President of the MWL Constituent Council, prominent personalities in the fields of Islamic Dawah and scholarship, senior diplomats, members of the Rabita Council and officials of the League.

The day's proceedings started with a recitation from the Glorious Qur'an after which Prince Majid read the address of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques on his behalf. In his keynote address, King Fahd underscored his Govern-

Cover Story

ment's keen interest in the issues and causes of concern to the worldwide com-

munity of Islam. Tracing the history of the establishment of the Muslim World League some 35 years ago in the wake of the First International Islamic Conference, held, in Makkah al-Mukarramah, in 1345H, and sev-

eral other meetings held subsequently, King Fahd observed that the main idea behind setting up this pan-Islamic, non-governmental Dawah organisation was to convey the message of Islam in the proper Islamic manner.

KING Fahd emphasizing the need for cohesion and solidarity in the Muslim ranks, asserting that the unity and cooperation were absolutely essential at this juncture when the Ummah and its various segments in the different regions of the world were passing through difficult times. He warned against sinister attempts being made by some reckless elements to undermine and distort the image of Islam. "Under the guise of Islam, horrendous crimes against innocent people are being committed and their blood is being spilt," King Fahd observed and presented a six-point strategy to correct the distorted portrayal of Islam.

Some important steps he outlined are the implementation of the Islamic Shariah in the daily lives of the Muslim people, devising a strategy to challenge and confront the inimical and hostile campaign against Islam in the media, giving proper guidelines to the Islamic Dawah workers, whose work must be in conformity with Allah's injunctions and the tradition of the Noble Prophet, studying the situation in the City of Al-Quds in Palestine and finding ways and means



Dr. Abdullah Saleh al Obeid
the newly elected MWL
Secretary General



Dr. Ahmad Muhammad Ali
the outgoing Secretary General

to protect the Al-Aqsa Mosque and other Islamic Shrines there, studying the conditions of Muslims in conflict areas such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and Chechnya etc and undertaking an in-depth study of the problems facing Muslim minorities in order to help them preserve the Islamic

values and Islamic identity.

The Saudi monarch re-affirmed the Kingdom's support and assistance for Muslims living in the different areas of the world. "This duty we are discharging in order to support Allah's religion as well as help our Muslim brethren at large," the King observed.

While stressing the need for cooperation, solidarity and unity in the cause of Islam, King Fahd also drew the attention of his audience to the cardinal position, which the Islamic Shariah should occupy in any Muslim scheme of things. "Without going back in absolute sincerity and with firm determination to Allah's Shariah, the Muslim Ummah cannot attain power or glory," King Fahd declared.

IN his address, Shaikh Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah bin Baz, thanked the members of the MWL Constituent Council, who had converged on Makkah al-Mukarramah to attend the 34th session of their august Council. He exhorted on Muslims to work sincerely in the service of Islam and Muslims. Similarly, he called on the Muslim rulers to implement Shariah in their countries.

Shaikh bin Baz urged the well-to-do Muslims to rush to the aid of their Muslim brethren in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He also laid stress on the dissemination of the tenets of the Qur'an and the

Cover Story

able prophet's Sunnah

DR Hamid al-Gabid, Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, who also spoke on the occasion, referred to the common objectives and priorities which the OIC and MWL share and cherish. He mentioned some conflict areas in which the Muslim world had achieved some progress, but observed that "equivocation" and "procrastination" so glaringly displayed by the international community when it comes to the resolution of the Muslim issues continue to hamper progress in these fields.

Dr Gabid said that the OIC hopes for the return of Al-Quds al-Sharif to Palestinian sovereignty as the capital of the state of Palestine. Regarding Bosnia-Herzegovina, the OIC Secretary-General assured that his Organization would mobilize all its resources to render assistance to the people and the Government of Bosnia-Herzegovina for the reconstruction of that war-ravaged country.

He lamented the fratricidal clashes which continue to wreak havoc in Afghanistan and Somalia and pledged that the OIC would work towards national reconciliation in these countries.

Regarding the situation in Jammu and Kashmir where the situation is constantly deteriorating, Dr Gabid remarked that the conflict in that South Asian region constitutes a threat to peace and stability. The OIC has adopted a principled stand on this issue, demanding that the massive violations of human rights perpetrated in Kashmir be brought to an end, and that a constructive dialogue be instituted between India and Pakistan to find a negotiated solution that would permit the Kashmiri people to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of the international resolutions and in conformity with the Simla Agreement.

SPEAKING on behalf of the members of the Council, President Mamoon Abdul Qayoom of Maldives, said that the Muslims must confront with all force, determination and solidarity at their disposal the hostile forces arrayed against them in today's world. The lives of Muslims are being destroyed, their lands being usurped and their honour violated in

many places as a result of the criminal acts perpetrated by the forces of non-belief and atheism with the aim of enslaving and humiliating the Muslims,' he remarked and enumerated such burning issues of grave dimensions for the Ummah as the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the problem of Al-Quds and Al-Aqsa Mosque and the internecine conflict in Afghanistan and Somalia.

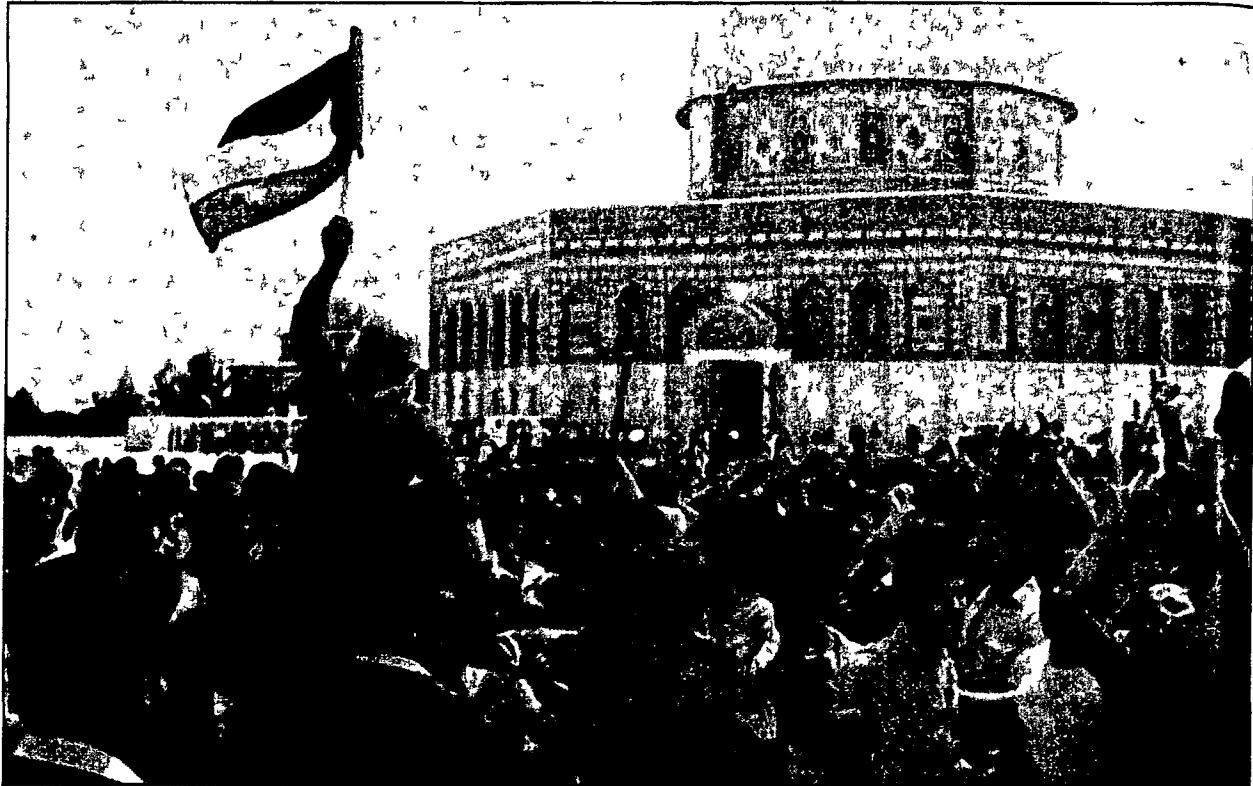
President Abdul Qayoom also made a reference to the challenges the Ummah was facing from within. Among these grave threats he mentioned the growing rise of terrorism, extremism and violence which has gone a long way in distorting the image of Islam and contributed greatly to its misrepresentation in the media, particularly in the Western world.

President Mamoon Abdul Qayoom went on to say that the Muslim people and their institutions are duty-bound to project the right image of Islam before the world, to elucidate its message through authentic and original sources and highlighted the Divine Religion's humanitarian concepts based on compassion, mercy, kindness and good behaviour.

Dr Abdullah bin Saleh al-Obeid, the newly-elected MWL Secretary-General, underscored the need for unity and solidarity among Muslims, observing that the Muslim World League and other pan-Islamic organizations, both at the official and non-official levels, were established by the Kingdom in order to serve the cause of Islam and Muslims in the proper Islamic manner. He also laid stress on the need to increase the awareness, knowledge and capabilities of the Islamic Dawah workers who must call people to Allah's religion, keeping away from all thoughts and ideas which have proved irrelevant and worthless by the mankind through its experiments with these worn-out ideologies and creeds.

EARLIER the Constituent Council held a procedural meeting in the morning which was presided over by Shaikh Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah bin Baz, Chief Mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the President of the MWL Constituent Council and attended by

Cover Story



The MWL Constituent Council reiterating the importance of Al Quds for Muslims, opposed any climb down on the issue

Shaikh Muhammad Nasir al-Aboudi, MWL Acting Secretary-General and senior Rabita officials

The meeting opened with a recitation from the Glorious Qur'an. Then, Shaikh Abdul Aziz bin Baz conveyed to the Council King Fahd's nomination of Dr. Abdullah bin Saleh bin Obeid for the post of the MWL Secretary-General. The members of the Council unanimously elected Dr. Obeid, expressing their appreciation over the nomination made by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques.

Dr. Obeid was then invited to address the gathering, who, at the outset, thanked the members of the Council for their trust and goodwill and said that he greatly valued this trust which the august assembly had reposed in him. Describing his new assignment as very noble and exalted as it was for the service of Islam and Muslims, the new Rabita Chief prayed Allah to provide him with necessary guidance and support and said that he would always seek to act on the advice and positive suggestions offered

by the members of the Council. Dr. Obeid profusely thanked the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques for nominating him to this august post.

The meeting was also addressed by Dr. Abdullah bin Abdul Muhsin al-Turki, Kingdom's Minister of Islamic Affairs, Awaqaf, and Guidance, who spoke highly of the services rendered by the new Secretary-General, when he was the Rector of the Islamic University, Madinah al-Munawwarah. He also paid rich tributes to the services rendered by the outgoing Secretary-General to the Muslim World League.

The meeting concluded with a brief address of Shaikh Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah bin Baz who exhorted the participants to fear Allah in all their affairs, private or public, and pay proper attention to the tenets of the Glorious Qur'an and the tradition of the Noble Prophet in their dealings. He also asked the Islamic Dawah workers to shun the dichotomy between what they preached and what they actually practised in their lives.

Cover Story

MWL Council Urges Solidarity

LATER, the MWL Constituent Council concluded its five-day-session, on 12 Sha'aban 1416/3 January 1996, at which it discussed at length the various items listed on its agenda, important among which were the pace and progress of the Islamic Dawah, implementation of Shariah, work done by the Rabita offices and centres abroad and reports of the various conferences in which the League had participated. At the end of the meeting, the Council adopted a number of resolutions and recommendations in regard to the various Muslim issues and problems.

The Council underscored the importance of the unity and solidarity in the Muslim ranks and laid stress on the need to implement the Islamic Shariah in the different walks of life as it is the only key to success in this life and the salvation in the Hereafter, as well providing solutions to all human problems.

In a final communique issued at the end of its five days meeting, the Council stressed that the Muslims should not make concessions on the issue of Al-Quds (Occupied Jerusalem) which it describes as one of the most important Islamic issues which must not be neglected.

THE MWL apex body condemned the US Congress decision to move the US Embassy to Al-Quds and called on heads of state of Islamic countries to stick to the Muslim rights in Al-Quds and to its restoration to the sovereignty of the independent Palestine state.

The Council urged a firm stance against the Israeli decision on Jerusalem and called on the OIC countries to take all necessary measures to force Israel to stop settlements and Judization of Al-Quds, confiscation of Islamic endowments and desecration of Islamic shrines.

It also called for supporting Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and for release of detainees. The Council further called for effective step towards renovation of Islamic mosques, schools and other institutions.

The Council hailed the steadfastness of citizens in Golan Heights and South Lebanon, de-

plored the Israeli aggressions and called for the unconditional Israeli withdrawal from the two areas.

AS for the Bosnian issue, the Council expressed its gratitude over the efforts made by Islamic countries and people to support the resistance of Bosnian Muslims against the Serb aggressions.

It called on Islamic governments to work for returning of Bosnian children and orphans adopted by non-Muslim organizations to their relatives and to set up schools and institutes for them in order to bring them up in accordance with Islamic teachings.

The Council called on OIC countries and international organizations to extend support to the Bosnian republic to rebuild its devastated infrastructure.

On the issue of Jammu and Kashmir, the Council denounced the brutality of Indian forces unleashed against Muslims and called for enabling the Kashmiri Muslim people to secure their rights in accordance with the Security Council resolutions adopted in 1948 and 1957.

IT also called on charitable societies and Islamic relief organizations to support the struggle of the Kashmiri people and to extend humanitarian aid to them and on the Islamic mass media to highlight and defend the Kashmir issue.

Regarding the Afghan issue, the Council deplored the insistence of Afghan factions to continue fighting and destroy their country and appealed to them to resort to the voice of reason and justice. It also deplored the meddling of some countries in the affairs of Afghanistan and called on them to stop this immediately.

It called on the OIC countries to coordinate their efforts, to take a firm stance against those acting against the commandments of God and to stop aid extended to the fighting factions in Afghanistan.

The Council appealed to charitable societies and Islamic relief organizations to extend aid to orphans, widows and other affected Afghan people.

Cover Story



The MWL apex forum urged the Muslim leaders and people to support and boost the resistance and steadfast struggle of the Bosnian Muslims which they have been pulling up against the Serbian aggression

The Council reiterated its solidarity, with the South Philippine Muslims in their just struggle to realize their legitimate aspirations and welcomed the official peace negotiations between the Filipino government and the Moro Liberation Front

It called on OIC countries, Islamic charitable societies and Muslim individuals to extend aid to the Muslim Mujahideen. It called for the OIC and the MWL to follow up the resolutions aimed at unifying the Filipino factions

As regards Muslims in Sri Lanka, the Council called for extending financial and moral aid to them to upgrade their academic and professional levels and to offer them academic scholarships in the different Islamic specializations and disciplines. It also called on the MWL and other Islamic organizations to extend support to the Islamic projects in Sri Lanka



REGARDING Indian Muslims, the Council called on the Indian Government to reverse the attempts made to impose a uniform Personal Law on Muslims as it contradicts the Islamic Shariah and to allow the Mus-

lims to abide by Islamic Shariah in their personal affairs

The Council also called on the Indian Government to fulfil its promises to rebuild the Babri Mosque at its site and to ensure its protection as well as other mosques threatened by Hindu extremists

As for Muslims in Burma, the Council called on the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) to form a contact committee to work for a solution to the problems of Burmese Muslims and secure their basic human rights and freedom and to help them to return to their country

It recommended Islamic organizations to extend humanitarian aid to them and to support their Islamic projects

The Council called for extending all material and moral support to the Islamic projects in South Thailand



AS for Nepalese Muslims, the Council called on Islamic organizations to extend all material and moral assistance to them and to strengthen the fraternal relations with

Cover Story

them

The Council stressed the importance of supporting the Islamic action in the People's Republic of China, particularly in Eastern Turkistan and called for stopping of Chinese nuclear tests there and the influx of Buddhist into Muslim areas

The Council recommended extending of financial and moral support to the Islamic institutions there with the aim of promoting Islamic education and culture among Muslims. It also recommended offering scholarships to Muslims in Eastern Turkistan

FOR East European Muslims, the Council called on Islamic countries to exert efforts to persuade the East European countries to respect the Muslim identity and to grant all legitimate rights to the Muslims living there

The Council called for extending material, moral and educational aid to the Islamic republics enjoying autonomous rule in the Russian Federation. It stressed on the importance of strengthening ties with the independent Islamic states in Central Asia

It also stressed the importance of supporting the efforts made by the people of Azerbaijan to defend their country against the Armenian occupation and called for withdrawal of the Armenian invaders

The Council warned against the Christian activities in these Islamic republics and called for support of Islamic education and culture there

As for Tajikistan, the Council underscored the importance of finding out a peaceful solution to the Tajikistan problem and called on all rival group to abide by Islamic teachings and avoid bloodshed

Regarding the Chechen problem, the Council denounced the use of force by the Russian Federation against the Muslim people of Chechnya and called for finding out a peaceful solution to this problem and urged support and assistance to the Chechnya people

As for West European Muslims, the Council noted the keenness of some European countries

to hold conferences and seminars on Islam and urged Muslims to encourage joint understanding and mutual respect with other parties

It called on Muslim minorities in West Europe to be proud of their Islamic culture and to keep themselves away from all that might undermine their religion and harm their reputation

The Council recommended Islamic organizations to follow up the activities of subversive movements and warn Muslims against them

It expressed its gratitude to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz for issuing an order to set up an Islamic satellite channel

IN another sensitive issue, the Council called on the OIC countries to support the Islamic countries which face mercenary invasion as it was the case in Maldives and Comoro Islands and urged taking stern international measures to prevent such invasions

The Council denounced the Ugandan invasion of South Sudan and deplored the interventions threatening the unity of Sudanese territories and the support extended to the Southern separatists

The Council called for helping Sudan to enforce its full sovereignty in the south of the country and to put an end to the rebellion by peaceful means

The Council condemned the Eritrean occupation of the Yemeni island of Hanish and called on the OIC and Arab League countries to work for withdrawal of the Eritrean forces and to take the necessary measures to prevent repetition of such an action

The Council denounced the bomb blast in Riyadh city and all similar actions and prayed God to protect the Kingdom and other Muslim countries from such criminal activities

The Council reiterated its thanks and gratitude to King Fahd and Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz for providing the MWL with the necessary means to discharge its duties toward Muslims all over the world

Focus on Ramadhan

The Multiple & Varied Benefits of Ramadhan

Dr Ahmad H Sakr

FASTING during the month of Ramadhan is a pillar of Islam. All Muslims are obliged to fast unless they have excuses. There are rules and regulations for fasting as well as for the excuses. Muslims do fast as a sign of their obedience to Allah. At the same time, they will earn the blessings of Allah, the Creator of the universe. While earning the rewards from Allah, they will get many other benefits socially, economically, spiritually, culturally, psychologically, medically, and many more.

There are many types of fasting outside the teachings of Islam. The People of the Book (Christians and Jews) were ordained by Allah to fast differently. They were also to fast as a matter of obedience to God.

In this short expose, the author included the following subjects: Significance of Fasting * Blessings of Fasting * Levels of Fasting and Final Remarks. In so doing, the author hopes that this information will be good not only for the practising Muslims but also for the non-Muslims.

We hope and pray that Allah will accept from all of us the efforts we are making individually and/or collectively. We pray that Allah will forgive us for our shortcomings, too. Allahu Ameen.

Significance of Fasting

THERE are many reasons why people do fast, depending upon the social, cultural, religious, and economic understanding of the people or the individuals. Dr Allan Cott in his book *Fasting: The Ultimate Diet* explains some of the reasons why people do fast. The following is a partial list of the aims of fasting as seen by the author of that book:

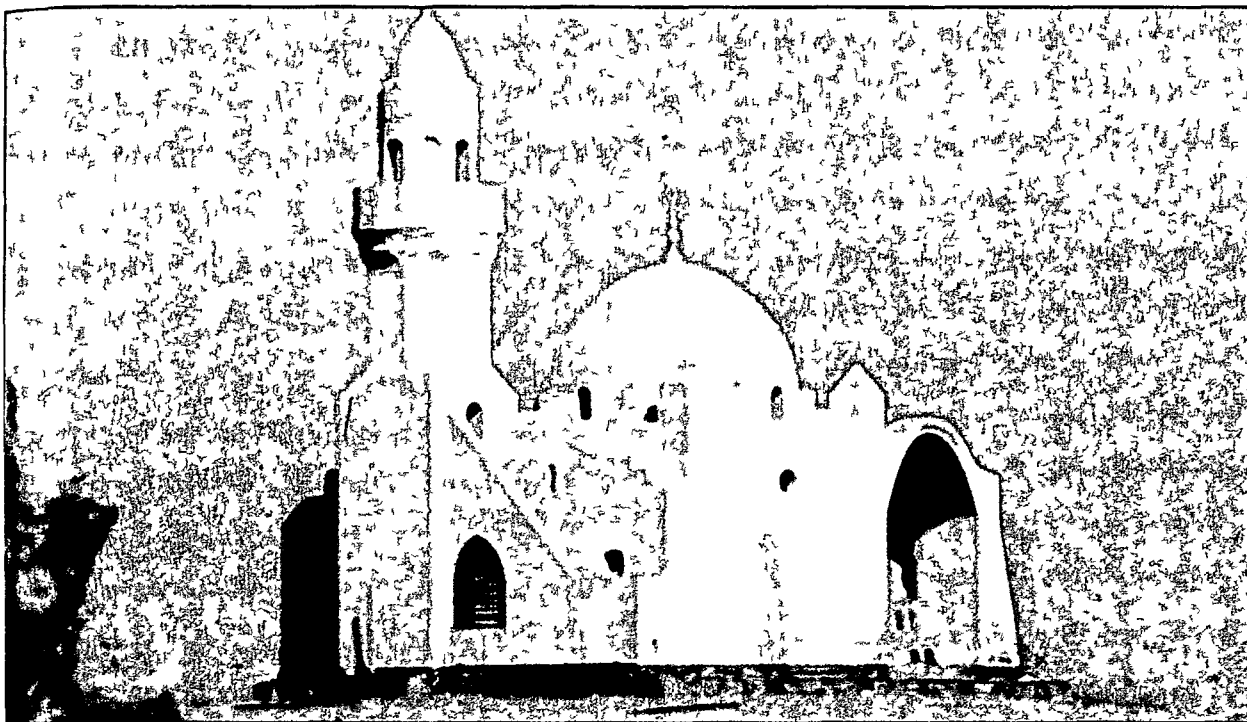
- ✧ To lose weight the quickest and easiest way
- ✧ To feel better physically and mentally
- ✧ To look and feel younger

- ✧ To save money
- ✧ To give the whole system a rest
- ✧ To clean out the body
- ✧ To lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels
- ✧ To cut down on smoking and drinking
- ✧ To get more out of sex
- ✧ To let the body heal itself
- ✧ To relieve tension
- ✧ To end dependence on drugs
- ✧ To sleep better
- ✧ To digest food better
- ✧ To regulate bowels
- ✧ To feel euphoric
- ✧ To sharpen the senses
- ✧ To quicken mental processes
- ✧ To save time
- ✧ To boost self-esteem
- ✧ To learn better eating habits
- ✧ To share with the hungry
- ✧ To gain control of oneself
- ✧ To seek spiritual revelations
- ✧ To observe religious rites
- ✧ To call attention to social issues
- ✧ To slow the aging process

However, Muslims do fast as a religious obligation upon them, so as to please Allah and to earn His blessings and rewards.

Fasting during Ramadhan is one of the five pillars of Islam (the other four are the statement of faith, prayers five times a day, Zakat, and making the pilgrimage to Makkah). Ramadhan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. Depending on the phases of the moon, it begins eleven or twelve days earlier each successive year.

Focus on Ramadhan



Mosques are specially illuminated and decorated throughout the Muslim world during Ramadhan

The reason Muslim believers fast can be found directly in the Qur'an, the divinely revealed scripture of Islam, and the Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims fast to fulfil a religious obligation and to earn the blessings and rewards of God (Allah).

Muslims believe that Ramadhan confers great blessings. The Revelations of the Qur'an started in this month, and the Qur'an is considered to be a guide to mankind. Scrolls of Prophet Ibrahim were revealed to him in the month of Ramadhan. The same thing is to be said about Zaboor, Torah and Injeel. All were revealed in the month of Ramadhan to Dawood, Moses and Jesus respectively.

Blessings of Fasting

THE benefits of the month of fasting are too many to be counted. If one does recognize them and realize their importance, he wishes the month of Ramadhan to be throughout the whole year. These blessings are given by Allah to the fasting Muslims, who are to fast with full faith and expectation.

These blessings and benefits of the month of fasting or Ramadhan have been grouped and summarized into different categories. They are summarized here

without commentary. It should be remembered that all of these blessings were taken directly from Qur'an and Hadith. The following is a partial list of the blessings and benefits of the month of fasting during Ramadhan.

Taqwa This concept may mean the following complementary descriptions:

- ✧ Fearing Allah
- ✧ Practising the Revelations of Allah
- ✧ Accepting the little things that one has achieved
- ✧ Preparing for departure from this world to the Hereafter
- ✧ Self-discipline
- ✧ Self-control
- ✧ Self-restraint
- ✧ Self-education
- ✧ Self-evaluation

By accepting these criteria and by practising them, the Muslim will implement the concept of *Taqwa* in his private and public life.

Protection This idea is to mean the following complementary explanations:

- ✧ Avoiding immorality

Focus on Ramadhan



Ramadhan, the month of devotion and prayers when Believers seek Allah's pleasure

- ✧ Avoiding outcry/uproar
- ✧ Avoiding stupidity
- ✧ Avoiding all *makrooh / mash booh/haram*

By achieving these good manners, a Muslim will come out of fasting a better human being in the society

Revelation of Qur'an The Qur'an was revealed during the month of Ramadhan. The Qur'an is meant

to be

- ✧ A guidance to mankind
- ✧ A criterion for the distinction of right from wrong
- ✧ A summation purification and culmination of all previous revelations
- ✧ A glad-tiding to the believers
- ✧ A Healer
- ✧ A Mercy

Doors of heaven are opened

Doors of hell are closed

Devils are chained down

Fasting with iman (faith) and expectation Such type of intention leads to forgiveness by Allah for the individual's sins

Door of Rayyan There is in Paradise a door, called *Al Rayyan*. It is for the fasting Muslims. Only those who fasted the month of Ramadhan are the ones to enjoy the bliss of Paradise inside that area.

Rejoicings There are two types of rejoicings for the Muslims who fast. These are

- a) When breaking fast
- b) When meeting Allah

Mouth smell The smell of the mouth of the fast ing Muslim will be better than the smell of musk on the day of judgement

Glad-tidings These glad-tidings are given to the well wishers while the ill wishers are to be stopped during fasting

Ramadhan Whoever fasts two consecutive fast ings of Ramadhan with good intention will receive forgiveness for the mistakes committed throughout the year

Multiplication of rewards Doing good = 10x, 70x, 700x or more during the month of Ramadhan

Feeding others Whoever invites others to break the fast and whoever takes care of the hungry, needy, orphans, and the elders will receive equal rewards to the fasting persons)

Fasting Muslims are in good condition when they

- a) Hasten their *Iftai*
- b) Delay their *Sahoor*

Focus on Ramadhan

Blessings of sahoor (the pre-dawn breakfast)

Among the benefits are the following

- ✧ Night Prayers
- ✧ Zikr Remembrance Contem-
plation
- ✧ Recitation of Qur'an
- ✧ Food for Sahoor
- ✧ Fajr Salat in Jamaat
- ✧ Du'a of Fajr
- ✧ Preparation for assuming leadership

Taraweeh prayers Whoever performs the *Taraweeh* prayers with sincerity and good intention will receive forgiveness of his past mistakes

Shafa'at (pleading one's case for forgiveness) Whoever fasts Ramadhan will receive the *Shafa'at* of

- ✧ Ramadhan
- ✧ Qur'an

Ihya' (passing nights awake) Last ten days of Ramadhan. When a Muslim makes this type of effort he will get rewards, forgiveness and multiples of blessings

I'tikaf (retreat) A Muslim who performs I'tikaf during the last ten days of Ramadhan will get

- ✧ Blessings and rewards
- ✧ Peace of mind
- ✧ Contemplation and evaluation
- ✧ Better citizen

Iqbalatul Qadr (The Night of Power) Whoever observes it with sincerity and good intention will get the following benefits

- ✧ Forgiveness of mistakes
- ✧ Better than 1000 months
- ✧ Du'a
- ✧ Zikr
- ✧ Prayers
- ✧ Reading Qur'an
- ✧ Rewards
- ✧ Blessings
- ✧ Better human being

Generosity Kindness, hospitality, visitation etc. All of these and many more are among the benefits of Ramadhan

Sadaqatul Fitr (charity during fasting) The ben-

efits of paying such a charity to the needy are tremendous among which are the following

- ✧ Purity
- ✧ Feeding the needy
- ✧ Sharing happiness
- ✧ Improving human relations
- ✧ Improving society

Zakat (religious tax payment) The benefits of paying Zakat are many. These are summarized as follows

- ✧ Purity
- ✧ Flourishing of wealth
- ✧ Improving economy
- ✧ Circulation of wealth
- ✧ Elimination of inflation
- ✧ Elimination of poverty

Fasting and health By fasting one gets the following benefits

- ✧ Purification of body from toxins
- ✧ Reducing of weight
- ✧ Purity of brain
- ✧ Rejuvenation of body
- ✧ Living life with happiness
- ✧ Looking younger

Change of Lifestyle By living a different life style one gets rid of the monotony of life and hence enjoys his life span

- ✧ Keeping awake during nights
- ✧ Shops closed in morning

Sharing Living Of hunger, thirst and rituals with others in the society

Eid ul Fitr (Feast) Sharing of happiness and paying visits to one another as members of the society

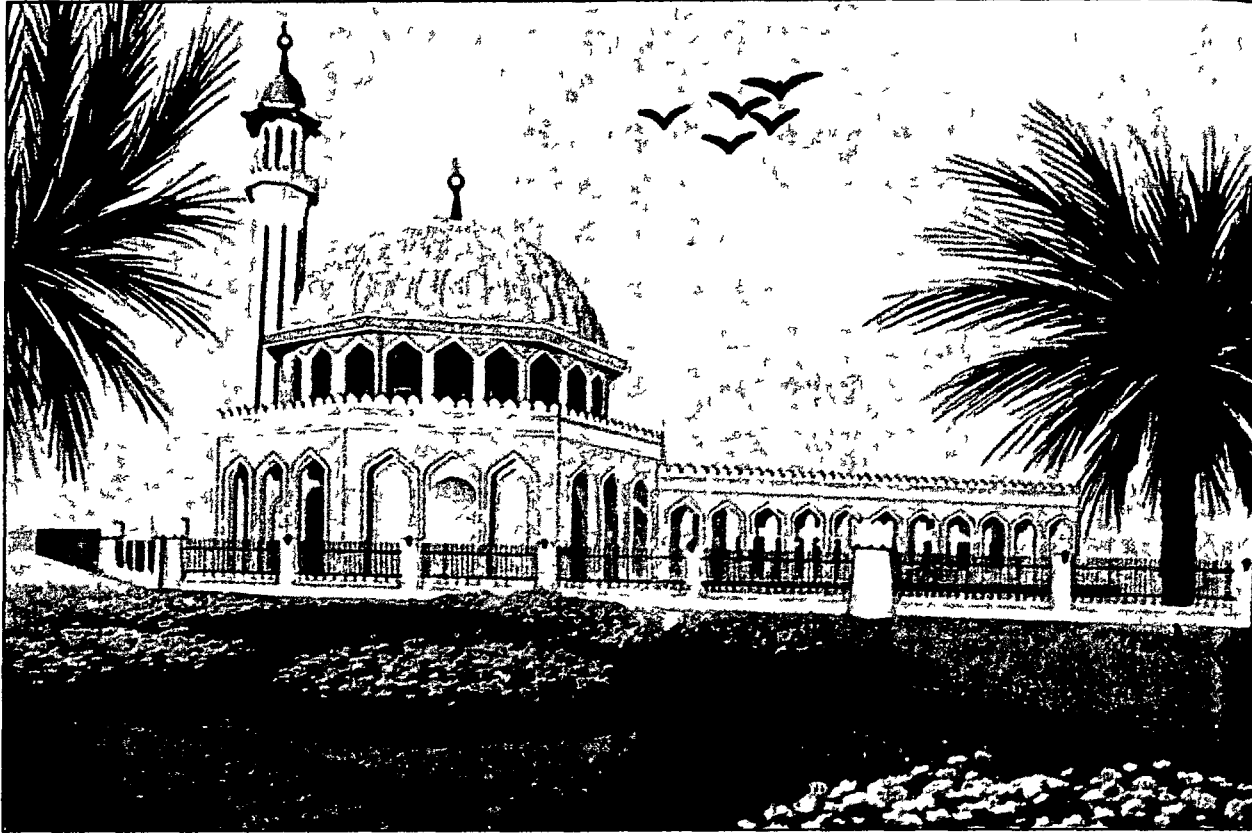
Graveyards Visiting One will get the following benefits by visiting graveyards

- ✧ Du'a for the deceased
- ✧ Preparing oneself for departure from this world
- ✧ Feeling respect for the deceased
- ✧ Making the person to be humble in his life

Du'a' at Iftar is accepted by Allah The supplication of a fasting person is accepted by Allah at Iftar time

Umrah in Ramadhan Visiting Makkah during

Focus on Ramadhan



In the last ten days of Ramadhan Muslims retire to mosques, spending all their time in acts of worship and remembrance of Allah

the fasting month of Ramadhan is

- a) Equal to one Hajj (pilgrimage)
- b) Equal to one Hajj with Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him)

Successes in Ramadhan Muslims throughout their history received many benefits and achieved successes during the month of fasting among which are the following

- ✧ Battle of Badr
- ✧ Battle of Khandaq
- ✧ Conquest of Makkah
- ✧ Battle of Tabuk
- ✧ Tariq Ibn Ziyad's successful expedition to Europe
- ✧ Salahuddin liberated Jerusalem from the Crusaders
- ✧ Egypt and Israel, 1973 — Egyptians kicked the Israelis out of Egypt during Ramadhan

Levels of Fasting

I MAM Ghazali in his book of *Ihya Ulum al-Din* says that there are three levels of fasting

- ✧ The fasting of the general public
 - ✧ The fasting of the select few
 - ✧ The fasting of the elite among the select few
- Imam Ghazali defines each type by saying the following
- ✧ The fasting of the general public involves refraining from satisfying the appetite of the stomach and that of sex
 - ✧ The fasting of the select few is to keep the ears, eyes, tongue, hands and the feet as well as other senses free of sin
 - ✧ The fasting of the elite among the select few is the fast of the heart from mean thoughts and worldly worries, and its complete unconcern with anything but Allah. Such a fast is broken by thinking of anything other than Allah and the last day as well as by concern over this world, except in so far as

Focus on Ramadhan

it promotes religion which belongs to the Hereafter

The fasting of the select few (which is the fasting of the virtuous persons) is to be accomplished through six things

- ✧ To refrain from looking at anything blameworthy and disapproved or anything which occupies the person and diverts him from remembering Allah
- ✧ To keep the tongue free from raving lying back biting tail bearing obscenity abusive speech winging hypocrisy and imposing silence upon it
- ✧ To close the ears to every reprehensible thing because everything which is unlawful to utter is also unlawful to hear
- ✧ To constrain the rest of the senses from sins to restrain the hand from reaching evil and to curb the foot from pursuing wickedness as well as to avoid questionable foods at the break of the fast
- ✧ To avoid overeating at the time of breakfast even from the lawful food thereby stuffing his belly full
- ✧ After breaking the fast the heart should remain in a state of suspense between fear and hope since he does not know whether his fast will be accepted. He should remain in such a state of suspense after every act of worship

Final Remarks

FASTING of the month of Ramadhan is one of the five pillars of Islam. Fasting outside this noble month is recommended. The whole idea of fasting is to earn the rewards from Allah and His blessings. At the same time the fasting Muslim will benefit many things in his life. The most important benefit is *Taqwa*.

We pray to Allah to grant us all the strength, health and patience so that we will continue to fast the month of Ramadhan and many other days throughout the year. May Allah bless the Muslim Ummah through the blessings of the month of Ramadhan.

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* For those who wish to read more about this subject may find information in Dr Sakr's book *Fasting Regulations and Practices*

Focus on Ramadhan



An Exercise in Self-Purification & Self-Discipline

Prof Ismail al-Faruqi

FASTING is an old religious custom. It was practised by lay persons and clergy in ancient religions, as well as by Jews and Christians. Though its purpose differed from religion to religion, there was general agreement that fasting was a self-preparation for communion with divinity.

Islam prescribes a rigorous fast (called *Siyam* in Arabic) for all healthy adult Muslims. The fast requires total abstinence from food, drink and sex from dawn to sunset during every day of the month of Ramadhan, the ninth month in the Islamic calendar which is based on the lunar year. The body may not partake of anything in any way or contact another of the opposite sex without breaking the fast. Exempted from this duty are children and persons suffering from sickness or undergoing the tremendously heavy burden of desert travel. In such cases, the exempted person is not to forego the fast but to postpone it to another, healthier or more restful time before recurrence of the following Ramadhan.

Long before Islam, the month of Ramadhan was regarded by the Arabs as a holy month. Its occasion imposed upon them the prohibition of war and hunting and brought about an uninterrupted

Patience, forbearance,
perseverance,
stead-fastness in suffering
and privation — these are
the qualities Islam seeks to
cultivate through fasting

peace during which travel and movement of goods across the desert were safe from attack. The Arabs reckoned Ramadhan as the month of spiritual stock-taking. Throughout its duration, they were especially keen to please, to settle old debts and disputes, to do good to their neighbours. The more morally sensitive among them underwent a retreat to a temple or into their homes to avoid disturbing their concentration and meditation. Before his commission as Prophet, Muhammad (peace be on him) was in the habit of retreating during Ramadhan to Hira, a cave outside Makkah, where he would spend several days in meditation. His wife used to send him daily provisions with a servant, knowing that her husband was devoting himself exclusively to worship.

Islam continued the tradition

of dedicating the month of Ramadhan to religious pursuits. Besides the fast, the Islamic tradition regarded moral and religious action during Ramadhan as especially meritorious and urged Muslims to increase their service to God during the month. It was during Ramadhan that Muhammad (peace be on him) received his first revelation.

The Two Purposes

Islam assigned two purposes to fasting: Self-discipline and commiseration with the hungry of the earth. We have seen that Islam repudiates self-mortification and asceticism; Islam does not believe that righteousness requires human-kind to deny itself. God wishes people to be free, healthy, fulfilled and happy. As philosophers might put it, going to the dentist is certainly a painful experience.

One does not undergo pain for its own sake, unless one assumes that suffering is the end of human life. One endures pain willingly, however, if one believes it will lead to health and well-being, which are the opposite of suffering. Accordingly, there is no denying that fasting is a hardship, so to what purpose did Islam impose it? To understand the purpose is to understand Ramadhan.

Self-discipline through fasting

Focus on Ramadhan

is a novel religious idea. Hunger and sexual desire are pivotal instincts of life. Their satisfaction is a capital requirement of any social order. But they are precisely two of the most sensitive areas of human life. Prohibition of food and sex constitutes a threat to life, the former to individual life and the latter to group life. Deliberate abstinence from food and sex stirs up the consciousness of imminent death to both the individual and the group and provides ample opportunity to mobilize consciousness and launch it into combat in defence of life.

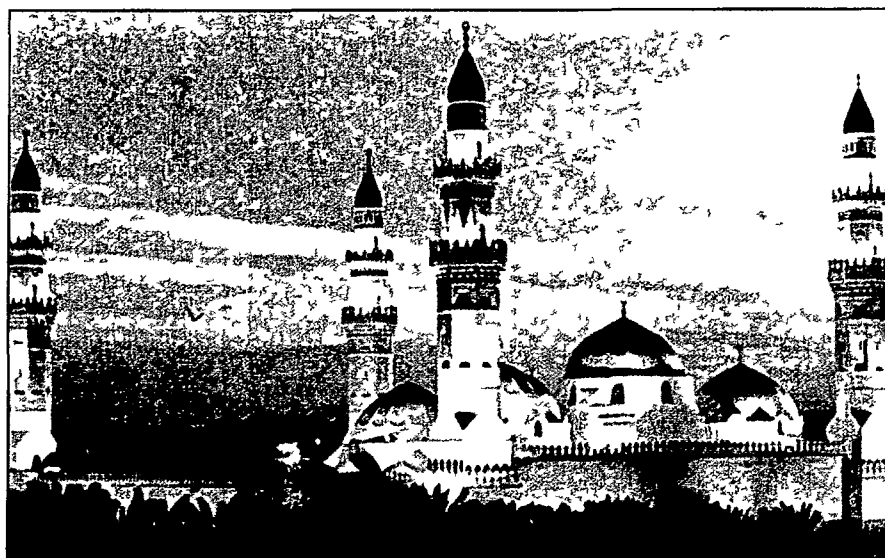
Islam has prescribed total abstinence from food and sex from dawn to sunset precisely for that reason. The threat to individual and group life must be resisted and the Muslim must be taught and trained in the art of resistance. Patience, forbearance,

perseverance, steadfastness in suffering and privation – these are the qualities Islam seeks to cultivate through fasting.

Conversely, the areas of food and sex are regarded as two of humanity's weakest spots in regard to morality and righteousness. The Muslim sees them as avenues for vice and immorality to find their way into the world. To learn to block those avenues of immoral behaviour, to fortify the individual against temptation and make one's moral house impregnable is the purpose of Islamic fasting.

Hence Islam looks upon fasting as the best exercise in the art of self mastery. To make the exercise more effective, Islam prescribes that the fast be broken promptly at sunset, even before the performance of the sunset *salat*. Thus Islam regards everyday in Ramadhan as a fresh exercise or trial which, if carried successfully to sunset, may be ended with celebration, food and joy, so that the abstinence – and hence the exercise – may be started all over again at dawn the next day. A little indulgence at night, the Leg

countenances. No time is better for expressing the social bond uniting Muslim to Muslim. All night, Muslim towns and villages are alive with togetherness and merry-making. Lest the latter get out of hand and cloud the moral lesson, Islam prescribes a special *salat* for the nights of Ramadhan, namely *tarawith*. Ideally this *salat* which is at least as long as all the others of the day combined, involves the recitation of the whole Qur'an in successive parts during the twenty nine or thirty days of the month.



The objective of the month long fasting, as stated in the Qur'an, is inculcation of *Taqwa* (fear of Allah).

islator seems to have thought might even make the daytime abstinence a better exercise in self mastery than continuous denial which can quickly become habitual and hence of diluted effect. The alternation of abstinence and indulgence each day and night is thought to be more forceful and effective.

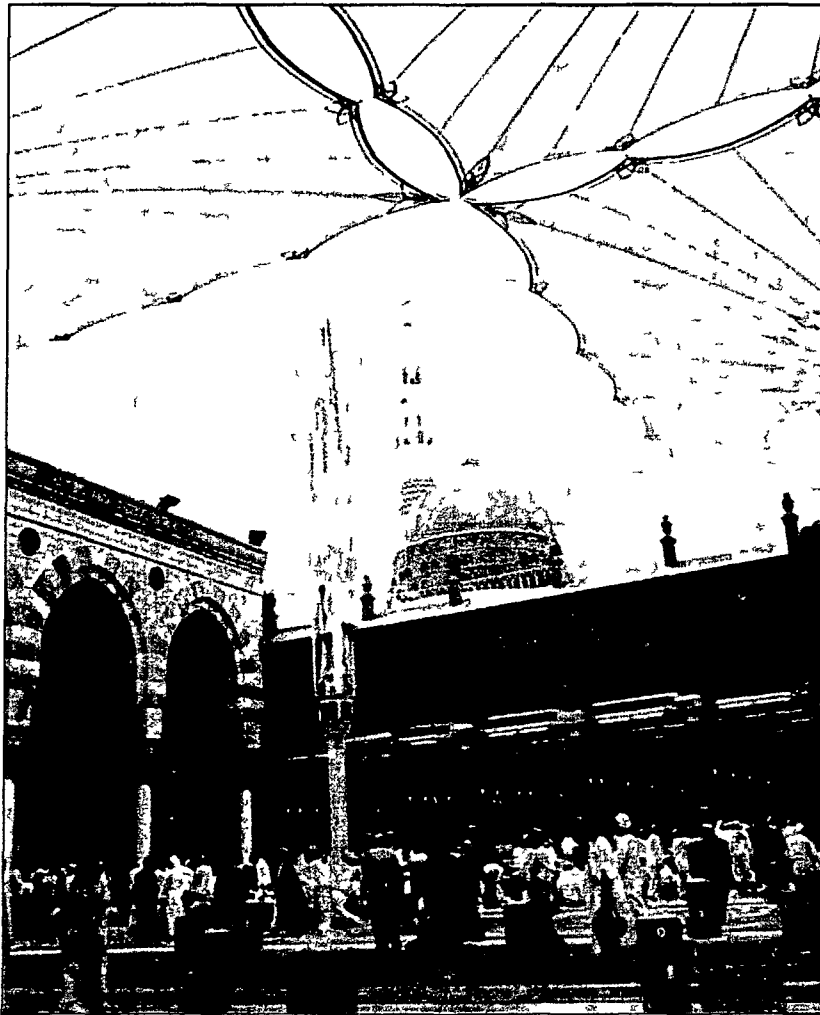
Social Bond

Throughout the Muslim world, the month of Ramadhan is received with joy. People uphold the fast and literally change their

The end of Ramadhan is marked by a feast called *Id al Fitr* (feast of the breaking of the fast) which Muslims celebrate with a congregational *salat*, the first morning after Ramadhan and with gifts, visit with relatives and friends, food and joyful events. New clothing for young and

old is imperative for *salat* of *Id al Fitr* which is held in as few places as possible so as to bring together the greatest possible number of Muslims in each place. The joys of the feast is a culmination of moral success at the daily fast of the previous month. If the trial of the month of Ramadhan has been a success in its totality, the feast is well deserved. The Muslim would have emerged, proven in his or her ability to bend pivotal forces of nature, the instincts for food and sex to the demands of morality and religion. After a suc

Focus on Ramadhan



The philosophy of fasting illustrates Islam's humanism and affirmation of this worldly existence

Successful Ramadhan, the Muslim must feel more capable and more ready to undertake any duty, any task. Like a bow, one has become tauter for the arrow.

The second purpose of fasting is commiseration with the hunger and deprived of the earth. Privation is without doubt humanity's constant and greatest affliction. There is no teacher more eloquent or effective than experience. For one to understand the fast of Ramadhan is to be reminded of and to sympathize with the deprived everywhere. To sharpen the lesson Islam recommends to those

who can afford it the voluntary act of feeding a neighbour, especially a poor one everyday of Ramadhan, in further emphasis that Ramadhan is the month of charity of altruism, of neighbourly love and kindness.

It also prescribes as personal atonement, the feeding of sixty persons for every day of Ramadhan on which the fast is broken deliberately in defiance of God, and the feeding of two people (in addition to making up the fast on other days) if the fast is broken for legitimate reasons. Finally it prescribes that no Muslim

may attend the *Id al-Fitr salat* unless he or she has extended charity to the poor the previous night. This is *Zakat al Fitr* (charity of fast ending). Its amount is prescribed to be the equivalent of two meals on behalf of each member of the household. The measure is designed to bring the joys of the feast to the poor and hungry as well.

This philosophy of fasting illustrates Islam's humanism and affirmation of this world. Fasting, the art of world-denial par excellence, practised by the ascetics of all religions is here transformed into an instrument of world affirmation. Rather than being a tool of self-denial for ascetics, fasting in Islam has become a tool of self-mastery for the better conduct of human life.

The pursuit of this life and of this world is thereby ennobled and brought closer to righteousness through charity and obedience to God. Where the work is light, it can be resumed after the noon *salat* which can also constitute a refreshing break. No one need work beyond the mid-afternoon *salat* unless it is for an emergency situation or for one's own pleasure and desire. The sunset *salat* terminates the day and the night *salat* marks the Muslim's retirement.

Salat is discipline. Its ablution, its form, its movement, the timing and number of genuflections and prostrations - all these constitute exercises in self-attainment to the call of God. The Qur'an says that *salat* is futile unless it leads to moral action and self-exertion in the greater cause of the cause of God. It is supposed to be more than just a reminder of God. For its duration, five times a day, it is to bring people for a time face to face as if, were, with their Lord, Master and Creator.

Focus on Ramadhan

Ramadan:

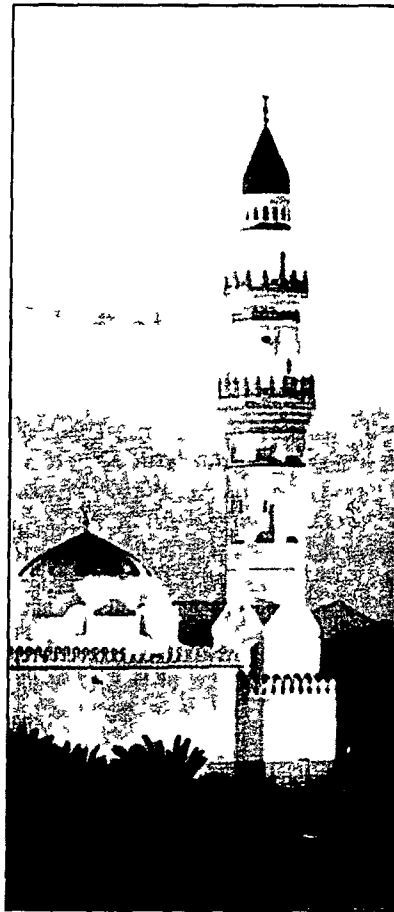
The Month of Blessings & Rewards

Abdelkader K Tayebi

WE shall soon be playing host Insha Allah to a unique respected and an honourable guest. A guest that visits us once a year and brings with it all sorts of goodness and happiness. A guest that brings with it the abundant Mercy and forgiveness of Allah. A guest that brings with it a smell of Paradise. A guest that draws the believer over to Allah and His Paradise and away from Shaytan and the Hell Fire.

It is Ramadhan the month of Qur'an the month of Mercy the month of Forgiveness the month of prayer at night and *Suhoor* the month of solidarity and mutual help the month of all blessings. We are advised in our noble religion of Islam to be kind and generous towards the guest. What then if the guest is the best of guests over the year? We should exert ourselves in generosity which is in this case good behaviour and intense worship.

It is from the immense mercy Allah upon us that He made us Muslims and believers and that He kept us alive till we reached Ramadhan. It is reported from the *Salaf* (Muslims of the first three centuries of Islam) that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and his companions used to strive to Allah during the six months before Ramadhan to extend their lives so that they could witness Ramadhan and in the six



months after Ramadhan, they would ask Allah to accept their fasting of Ramadhan. Therefore we have to be thankful to Allah that He allowed us to witness this Ramadhan so let us please Him during this month.

Why Do We fast ?

It is in the nature of humans to ask and to wonder why they do things. Muslims do things to

please Allah and they can please Allah only by obeying Him and practising His religion. Thus in answer to the question some ignorant people may ask 'why do we fast?' We respond that it is a commandment and a clear order from Allah to us and we have no other choice but to obey Allah and please Him out of love and fear at the same time. Allah says in the meaning of

O you who believe, fasting has been prescribed for you as it had been prescribed for people before you so that you will (learn how to) attain Taqwa. (Qur'an al-Baqarah 2:183)

Ibn Umar reports that Allah's Messenger said 'Islam is based on (the following) five (principles):

- 1 To testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and Muhammad is Allah's Apostle
- 2 To offer the (compulsory congregational) prayers dutifully and perfectly
- 3 To pay Zakat (i.e. obligatory charity)
- 4 To perform Hajj (i.e. Pilgrimage to Makkah)
- 5 To observe fast during the month of Ramadhan (Bukhari)

Abu Huraira narrates that one day while Allah's Messenger was sitting with the people a man came to him walking and said 'O Allah's Apostle! What is Belief?'

Focus on Ramadhan

The Prophet said "Belief is to believe in Allah, His Angels His Books His Apostles and the meeting with Him, and to believe in the Resurrection. The man asked, 'O Allah's Apostle! What is Islam?'" The Prophet replied,

"Islam is to worship Allah and not to worship anything beside Him to offer prayers perfectly to pay the (compulsory) charity, i.e. Zakat and to fast the month of Ramadhan (*The narration of Muslim has Hajj as well*). The man again asked 'O Allah's Apostle! What is *Ihsan* (i.e. perfection or benevolence)?" The Prophet said

"*Ihsan* is to worship Allah as if you see Him and if you do not achieve this state of devotion, then (take it for granted that) Allah sees you."

Then the man left. The Prophet said, 'Call him back to me. They went to call him back but could not see him. The Prophet said

"That was Jibreel (Gabriel) who came to teach the people their religion" (Bukhari).

Since Islam means submission to Allah, we have no other choice but to submit ourselves to Allah and obey His commandments. It is from the mercy of Allah towards us that while He prescribed to us fasting, He also showed us the greatness of fasting in this world and in the Hereafter to make it dear to us.

Virtues of Fasting

There are many virtues of Ramadhan and fasting expressed in the Qur'an and in the authentic Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be on him). If only one of these virtues was told us, it would have been enough motivation to seek perfection in our fasting, seeking that reward and the pleasure of Allah, but it is again from the mercy of Allah that He taught us

many virtues of fasting so that we get encouraged even more. I will focus mainly on the virtues of forgiveness, salvation from Hell Fire and reward of Paradise, but before that, I shall mention few other virtues that are not less important than the latter.

A means of intercession on the Day of Judgement 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr reported that the Messenger of Allah, (peace be on him), said: "The fast and the Qur'an are two intercessors for the servant of Allah on the Day of Resurrection. The fast will say 'O Lord, I restrained him from his food and desires during the day. Let me intercede for him.' The Qur'an will say 'I restrained him from sleep at night. Let me intercede for him.' And their intercession will be accepted" (Ahmad).

Laylatul Qadr (the Night of Decree) *Indeed We have revealed it (Qur'an) in the Night of Decree. And what will explain to you what the Night of Decree is? The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months. Therein descends the Angels and the Spirit (Jibreel) by Allah's permission on every errand (they say) 'Peace (continuously) till the rise of morning'.* (97:1-5)

Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) said: "The blessed month has come to you. Allah has made fasting during it obligatory upon you. During it the gates to Paradise are opened and the gates of Hellfire are locked and the devils are chained. There is a night (during this month) which is better than a thousand months. Whoever is deprived of its good is really deprived (of something great)." (Ahmad, an-Nisa'i and al-Bayhaqi).

Umra in Ramadhan is equiv-

alent to Hajj Ata said: "I heard Ibn Abbas saying: 'Allah's Apostle asked an Ansari woman (Ibn Abbas named her but Ata forgot her name), 'What prevented you from performing Hajj with us?' She replied 'We have a camel and the father of so-and-so and his son (i.e. her husband and her son) rode it and left one camel for us to use for irrigation.' He said (to her), 'Perform 'Umra when Ramadhan comes for Umra in Ramadhan is equal to Hajj (in reward), or said something similar' (Bukhari).

A Means of Forgiveness It is a fact that none of us is perfect. We all have some weaknesses and shortcomings and we find ourselves committing sins out of ignorance or out of submission to our desires and whims and thus driving ourselves away from Allah, soiling our hearts and making them un-amenable to guidance and overloading our books of bad deeds. However, Allah said of Himself that He is the Most Merciful, the oft-Forgiving.

As part of this infinite Mercy, He made available to us various ways of achieving forgiveness and expiation of sin. Among the most important and beneficial of these ways of forgiveness is fasting in general and in Ramadhan in particular. Let us discover this gladdening tidings from the sweet words of the Messenger of Allah, (peace be on him).

Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

"The time between the five prayers, two consecutive Friday Prayers and two consecutive Ramadhans are for the expiations for all that has happened during that period, provided that one has avoided the grave (major) sins." (Muslim).

Abu Hurairah narrated that Allah's Messenger said: "Whoever observes fasts during the month of Ramadhan out of sincere faith and hoping to attain Allah's rewards

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then all his past sins will be forgiven (Bukhari)

Whoever establishes prayers during the nights of Ramadhan faithfully out of sincere faith and hoping to attain Allah's rewards (not for showing off) all his past sins will be forgiven (Bukhari)

Abu Hurairah also narrated that the Prophet (peace be on him) ascended to the *minbar* (pulpit) and said *Aameen* (O Allah grant it) *aameen aameen*. So it was said O Messenger of Allah you ascended to the minbar and said *aameen aameen aameen*? So he said Jibril came to me and said Whoever reaches the month of Ramadhan in and does not have (his sins) forgiven and so enters Fire then may Allah distance him say *aameen*. So I said *aameen* (Ibn Khuzaimah Ahmad and al-Buhaqi Sahih)

In Ramadhan Paradise opens its doors, Hell closes its and Satans are chained

Artajah said We were with Utbah ibn Farqad while he was discussing Ramadhan. A companion of the Prophet entered upon the scene. When Utbah saw him he became shy and stopped talking. The man (the companion) spoke about Ramadhan saying I heard the Messenger of Allah say during Ramadhan The gates of Hell are closed the gates of Paradise are opened and the devils are in chains. An angel calls out O you who intend to do good deeds have glad tidings O you who intend to do evil refrain until Ramadhan is completed (Ahmad and al-Nasa'i)

Lasting in Ramadhan, a shield from Hell We all want to be saved from Hellfire. Is our fasting going to help us keep away from Hell? The answer is in the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

The Qur'an rather talks about the reward of fasting and there are verses which mention that those who obey Allah will be saved from

Hell and fasting is a form of obeying Allah. We shall take up the verses that talk about the reward in the section related to Paradise.

However our beloved Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) said some explicit things regarding this topic.

Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri reported that the Messenger of Allah said No servant fasts on a day in the path of Allah except that Allah removes the Hellfire 70 years further away from his face (Bukhari and Muslim)

Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri relates that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said Fasting is a shield with which a servant protects himself from the Fire (Ahmad Sahih)

Uthman ibn Abi al-Aas relates that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said Whoever fasts a day in the way of Allah Allah places between him and the Fire a trench like that between heavens and the earth (at Tirmidhi and at Tabarani Sahih)

Abu Hurairah narrated that Allah's Messenger (peace be on him) said When the month of Ramadhan starts the gates of the heavens are opened and the gates of Hell are closed and the devils are chained (Bukhari)

The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said When it is the first night of Ramadhan the devils are chained. The gates of Fire are locked – not a single gate is opened and the gates of Paradise are opened – not a single gate is locked and a caller calls out O seeker of good come forward and O seeker of evil withhold and there are many whom Allah frees from the Fire – and that is every night (at Tirmidhi Ibn Majah and Ibn Khuzaimah Hasan)

Jabir relates that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said There are in the month of Ramadhan in every day and night those to whom Allah grants freedom from the Fire and there is for every Muslim a supplication which he can make and will be granted (Ibn Hibban Sahih)

In the famous hadith of Mu'adh I said O Messenger of Allah tell me of an act which will take me into Paradise and keep me away from Hell Fire. He said You have asked me about a major matter yet it is easy for him for whom Allah Almighty makes it easy. You should You should fast in Ramadhan. Then he (the Prophet) said shall I not show you the gates of goodness? Fasting is a shield (at Tirmidhi)

We pray to Allah to make for us this Ramadhan a shield from Hell Fire.

Fasting in Ramadhan A Way to Paradise We have seen that Ramadhan saves from Hell Fire and saves from sins by leading to forgiveness. Besides all this (and it would have been enough if it were only that) Ramadhan leads the fasting believer to *al Jannah* (Paradise). Paradise that contains what no eye has ever seen what no ear has ever heard what never crossed the mind of a human being and that contains all what a soul desires.

Ramadhan Lead to Jannah?

From al-Qur'an O you who believe fasting has been prescribed for you as it has been prescribed for people before you so that you will (learn how to) attain *Taqwa* (al-Baqarah 2:183)

If a person achieves *Taqwa* he/she is among *al Muttaqeen* and Allah in many places in the Qur'an mentions that the house of *al Muttaqeen* is *al Jannah* (Paradise) as we will see in a coming section Insha Allah

and fast it is better for you if only you knew (al-Baqarah 2:184)

Verily the Muslim men and women the believing men and women the men and women who are obedient (to Allah) the men and women who are truthful (in